Daniel's Prayer of Repentance, 9:1-19

I. NRS Daniel 9:1-3  In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. 3 Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

A. The prophet Jeremiah . . . Jerusalem . . . namely, seventy years—Daniel must have been reading Jeremiah 25:11-12 and/or 29:10

B. There are 3 ways to calculate the seventy years

1. The 1st year of the captivity, 605-539

   a. 605 = Jer 25:11-12 (cf 29:10) and the 1st year of Daniel's/Judah's exile, Dan 1:6

   b. 539 = 539, the 1st year of Cyrus/Darius & Cyrus' decree, Ezra 1:1-4

   c. This comes to 66 years

   d. Allowing organization for departure, etc., 70 years

   e. This is an approximation allowing 4 years of organization

2. The 2nd carrying away, 587-516

   a. 587 = the destruction of the temple/Jerusalem, 2 Chron26:19-20

   b. 516 = rebuilding of temple, Ezra 6:15; Zech 1:12

   c. 69/70 years

3. Seventy years = seventy years of the Babylonian empire

   a. Babylon destroyed Assyria in 609

   b. Babylon fell in 539

   c. The total = 70 years

C. Daniel's urgency, vv. 4-19, indicate he sensed the 70 years were about up

   1. Since Daniel was exiled in 605, the likelihood is that he is figuring from
2. There is no way to tell

3. Figuring from that date would make him approximately 83 years old, 605 - 539 = 66 + 17 (approximate age in 605) = 83

4. Figuring from the 2nd would make him 106, 587/6 - 516 = 70 + 36 (Daniel's age in 587/6 if he was 17 in 605) = 106

5. The 3rd would match the 1st computation

D. Prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes were outward symbols of Daniel's humiliation and penitence

II. Daniel 9:4-19 is an amazing prayer!

A. Vv. 17-19, the petition:

1. Requests God to look with favor on your desolate sanctuary
2. To see the desolation of the city that bears your name
3. Daniel is requesting God:
   a. To forgive Israel
   b. To end the exile, returning the Jews to Jerusalem

B. Daniel's petition is base upon God's great mercy, v. 18

C. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, which included our kings, our princes and our fathers, and . . . all the people of the land, v. 6; cf. Vv. 7-8

D. Daniel used several expressions to illustrated Israel's total disobedience:

1. We have sinned, vv. 5,11,15
2. [We have] done wrong, vv. 5,15
3. [We] have rebelled, vv. 5,9
4. [We] have turned away, vv. 5,11
5. [We] have not listened/obeyed, vv. 6,10,11,14
6. [We] are covered with shame because of our unfaithfulness/because
we have sinned, vv. 7,8

7. All Israel has transgressed, v. 11
8. Our sins [and iniquities], vv. 13,16

E. Because Israel totally disregarded God's will he poured out (v.11) the promised punishment of Leviticus 26:14, 31-33

1. **Leviticus 26:14** "But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands,

2. **Leviticus 26:31-33** I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. 32 I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. 33 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.

F. Daniel also reflects God's great characteristics:

1. **Great and awesome**, v. 4
2. **Love**, v. 4
3. **Righteous**, vv. 7,14,16
4. **Forgiving**, vv. 9,19

G. God's past revelations of himself, e.g., the Exodus, is the basis for Daniel's future hope — "As you have brought us out of Egypt, so now bring us out of Babylon," cf. vv. 15-16

H. Like Moses intercessory prayer (Exod 32:12-13), Daniel is concerned for God's reputation — **For your sake, O my God, do not delay**, v. 19

1. The destruction of the temple/Jerusalem would cause nations to assume that God was impotent or a delusion

2. The people did not realize it was God who did all of this.

*Gabriel's Response, 9:20-23*

**III. Daniel 9:20-23** While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill—
21 while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. 23 As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

A. As soon as Daniel began to pray Gabriel, mentioned in 8:16, came in swift flight to give Daniel answers

B. The reason for such a response was that Daniel was highly esteemed

IV. NIV Daniel 9:24-27 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. 25 'Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

V. Excursus: History of Interpretation — Daniel 9:24-27 has been Varsiously Interpreted

A. The Maccabean View — The passage refers to events surrounding Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC)

1. The decree to to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25) alludes to Jeremiah's prophecy of the "seventy years of captivity" (Jer. 25:10-11)

2. Beginning in 605, when the Babylonians destroyed the temple, it extended to the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabeus (164) or the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164).

3. Beginning with 586 the 490 years is extended to 96 BC

4. Objections include:
Commentary on Daniel: Chapter 9—Daniel's Prayer of Repentance & the Prophecy of the 70 Weeks (9:1-27); BI 4244/4344 Ezekiel and Daniel; Faulkner University; Randall C. Bailey, Ph.D.; Spring, 2010

a. The 490 years is only an approximate fulfillment

b. Antiochus IV cannot fulfill the purpose for the "seventy weeks," "to finish the transgression," to make "an end to sin," "to bring in everlasting righteousness."

B. **Dispensational interpreters** understand Dan. 9:26 to allow for the entire church age, and v. 27 to describe the seventieth week

1. This includes the seven-year great tribulation and the appearance of the Antichrist.

2. Dispensationalists argue that Daniel's vision appears to be dealing primarily with the events regarding the nation of Israel, not the Gentiles.

3. Other interpreters have thought that no such gap is implied by Daniel's words.

C. **Preterist** — sees the "seventy sevens" as a literal period of 490 years, culminating around the time of Christ.

1. The starting date for this period of time is not likely to be 538 BC., when Cyrus gave permission for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4), for that was not a decree to build the city, and 490 years from 538 yields 48 BC, a date of no great significance.

   a. One reasonable possibility is the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:12-26, which occurred in 458 BC.

   b. Though this decree still has much to do with provisions for the temple, it makes provision for "magistrates and judges" (Ezra 7:25) and thus assumes rebuilding of a city would take place.

   c. And 490 years after 458 BC. is exactly a.d. 33, the most likely date of the crucifixion of Christ.

   d. 458 + 33 = 491, but one year must be subtracted since there was no year 0, so from 458 BC to AD 33 is exactly 490 years, or "seventy sevens."
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e. This calculation also fits Dan. 9:24, for Christ's death accomplished the things mentioned there as what would be done in the 70 weeks:

f. "To finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness."

2. Possibly a better understanding of this interpretation is that the $7 + 62 = 69$ weeks in v. 25 brings us to AD 26, and some NT scholars think that Jesus began his ministry in AD 26 and died in 30.

a. But v. 26 simply says, "After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing," and in this interpretation Jesus' death did occur shortly after the 62 weeks.

b. This understanding of the verse allows for Jesus' death in either AD 30 or 33.

3. A third possibility for the start of the 490 years is 445 BC, when Artaxerxes gave letters to Nehemiah authorizing him to rebuild the wall and to build a home in Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5-8; cf. Neh. 2:1 for the date, 13 years after Ezra 7:7).

a. But 490 years after 445 BC gives AD 46, a date well beyond the crucifixion of Christ.

b. An alternative to this view is to see Christ's death occurring in the sixty-ninth week, which would be AD 39, but that is still too late.

c. However, some interpreters argue that a "year" in this prophecy should be calculated at 12 months x 30 days = 360 days (cf. Dan. 12:7, 11; Rev. 11:2; 12:6.

d. On that basis, 69 "weeks" of such years equals 483 years of 360 days, and that comes out to AD 32 or 33, depending on whether Artaxerxes' letter in Neh. 2:5-8 is dated 445 or 444 BC.

4. It is difficult to decide among these alternatives.

D. The Covenantal View sees "seven sevens" + "sixty-two sevens" as culminating in the new covenant created by Jesus' death and the destruction of Jerusalem as the ending of the OT sacrifices.
E. The following chart from the ESV Study Bible summarizes:

VI. Returning to the Text — a Modified Preterist Interpretation

A. Daniel had prayed for a restoration of God's people

B. God had responded that **seven sevens, and sixty-two sevens** would be needed to accomplish this

1. This figures are enigmatic

2. Literally **seven sevens** is "sevens seventy," while **sixty-two sevens** is
Commentary on Daniel: Chapter 9—Daniel's Prayer of Repentance & the Prophecy of the 70 Weeks (9:1-27); BI 4244/4344 Ezekiel and Daniel; Faulkner University; Randall C. Bailey, Ph.D.; Spring, 2010

"sevens and sixty and two"

3. Most scholars interpret seven to be 7 years due to Leviticus 25:8 — "Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years." Thus:

a. **Seven sevens** = 49 years
b. **Seventy sevens** = 490 years
c. **Sixty-two sevens** = 434 years.

C. According to Gabriel, **Seventy sevens**, or 490 years would be needed in order:

1. **To finish transgression:**
   a. The 490 year period would be necessary to cleanse Israel of its idolatry
   b. By the time of Christ, Israel was scattered among the nations and no longer idolatrous

2. **To put an end to sin** — by the end of the 490 years a way would be provided wherein sins could be forgiven — blotted out

3. **To atone for wickedness** — by the end of the 490 years a system would be established/announced might be permanently cleansed from sin — the blood Jesus Christ

4. **To bring in everlasting righteousness** — within the 490 year period a system of righteousness would be established — Christianity

5. **To seal up vision and prophecy** — within the 490 years the Old Testament Messianic visions and prophecies would be fulfilled

6. **To anoint the most holy** — within the 490 years Jesus Christ would be anointed, i.e., seated at God's right hand as king of the kingdom

D. **Summary — 3 major divisions:**

1. **Seven sevens**, 49 years = required for the complete rebuilding of Jerusalem with walls, temple, and streets.
2. **Sixty-two sevens**, 434 years = the interim between the **seven sevens**, 49 years and the **seven** (v. 27), thereby making 483 years

3. **Seven**, 7 years (v. 27) = the period of good news — the gospel for both Jews and Greeks — which was divided into two periods — **In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering**
   
a. Jesus and the disciples preached the gospel for 3.5 years until his crucifixion and resurrection

b. Following the resurrection the disciples proclaimed the gospel to the Jews.

E. The clock would start ticking for this period **From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**

1. **Zerubbabel was commissioned to build the temple**
   
a. Cyrus is the one who commissioned it — *NIV* **Ezra 1:2** ¶ "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah."

b. By Ezra 3:10 they laid the foundation and begun sacrifices

c. However, the work was frustrated by the people living in the land (cf. 2 Kgs 17:24-41)

d. Finally the temple was completed **The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius**, Ezra 6:15

e. Darius reigned 521-486

f. His 6th year = 516/515, some 23/24 years after Cyrus' commission

2. **Ezra was commissioned to restore the law**
   
a. This occurred "during the 5th month of the 7th year of Artaxerxes"
b. Artaxerxes reigned 477-425

c. The 7th year would be 470 BC

d. This would be some 69/70 years since Cyrus' decree of 539

e. This was about 46 years since the completion of the temple

3. **Nehemiah was commissioned to rebuild the walls and restore the city**

a. This occurred in the 20th year of Artaxerxes, Neh 1:1

b. This would be about 577 BC

c. This would be 13 years after Ezra's trip

4. So the **issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem** occurred during the 20th year of Artaxerxes

5. The 490 years must begin here in 457

F. All of the above may be summarized as follows:

1. **Seven sevens**, 49 years, would be required for Jerusalem to be rebuilt as it had been before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it

   a. The commission occurred in 457

   b. 49 years later would be 408

2. The **sixty-two sevens**, 434 years

   a. 408 BC, the year Jerusalem was completed

   b. 434 years later would be 25/26 AD

   c. This would be about the year Jesus began his ministry

   d. Jesus was born in 4 BC

3. **Seven** = the ministry/death/resurrection of Jesus about 25/26 AD

   a. **He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering, v. 27**

   b. Once Christ died, the OT sacrifices came to an end
c. That older system was supplanted by the better system

G. Verse 26b: The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

1. The people of the ruler — Vespasian and his army

2. Will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

a. Following Jesus' crucifixion Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70)

b. The 490, as we have seen, cannot embrace this period

c. Verse 27 will not allow it, as we have seen

d. Verses 26 and 27 alternate between predicting the death of Jesus and the punishment Jerusalem and its leaders incurred as a result

(1) Death of Jesus — After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing

(2) Destruction of Jerusalem — The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed

(3) Death of Jesus — He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering

(4) Destruction of Jerusalem — And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

VII. Conclusion

A. No interpretation is without difficulty
B. The single most important thing to remember is that Daniel's message for his audience is that God has allotted the amount of time for these events, and therefore his people should trust and endure.

C. This is very similar to understanding the symbols of Revelation as being understood only by the people of John's day

1. We cannot understand the specific meaning of the symbols of Revelation

2. But we do know they indicate that God is in control and his people are/will be victorious